

The Story of WAITSTILL BAXTER



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CHAPTER XII.

Uncle Bart Discourses.

UNCLE BART and Cephas were taking their morning stroll under the Northend apple tree as Waitstill passed the Joiner's shop and went over the bridge.

"Uncle Bart might somehow guess where I am going," she thought, "but even if he did he would never tell any one."

"Where's Waitstill bound this afternoon, I wonder?" drawled Cephas, rising to his feet and looking after the departing team. "That reminds me I'd better run up to Baxter's and see if anything's wanted before I open the store."

"If it makes any difference," said his father dryly as he filled his pipe, "Patty's over to Mrs. Day's spendin' the afternoon. Don't s'pose you want to call on the pig, do you? He's the only one to home."

Cephas made no remark, but gave his trousers a hitch, picked up a chip, opened his jackknife and, sitting down on the grassward, began idly whittling the bit of wood into shape.

"I kind o' wish you'd let me make the new ell two story, father. 'Twouldn't be much work; take it in slack time after hayin'."

"Land o' liberty! What do you want to do that for, Cephas? You 'bout pestered the life out o' me gittin' me to build the ell in the first place when we didn't need it no more'n a toad does a pocketbook. There nothin' would do but you must paint it, though I shan't be able to have the main house painted for another year, so the old wine an' the new bottle side by side looks like the old driver an' makes us a laughin' stock to the village, an' now you want to change the thing into a two story! Never heard such a crazy idee in my life."

"I want to settle down," insisted Cephas doggedly.

"Well, settle—I'm willin'! I told you that afore you painted the ell. Ain't two rooms, 14 by 14, enough for you to settle down in? If they ain't, I guess your mother'd give you one o' the chambers in the main part."

"She would if I married Phoebe Day, but I don't want to marry Phoebe," argued Cephas. "And mother's gone and made a summer kitchen for herself out in the ell a'ready. I bet yer she'll never move out if I should want to move in on a sudden."

"I told you you was takin' that risk when you cut a door through from the main part," said his father genially. "If you hadn't done that your mother would 'a' had to gone round outside to git in the ell, and mebbe she'd 'a' stayed to home when it stormed, anyhow. Now your wife'll have her troopin' in an' out, in an' out, the whole 'durin' time."

"I only cut the door through to please mother, so't she'd favor my gittin' married, but I guess't won't do no good. You see, father, what I was thinkin' of is, a girl would mebbe jump at a two story, four roomed ell when she wouldn't look at a smaller place."

"Pends upon whether the girl's the jumpin' kind or not. Hadn't you better git everything fixed up with the one you've picked out afore you take your good savin's and go to buildin' a bigger place for her?"

"I've asked her once a'ready," Cephas allowed with a burning face. "I don't s'pose you know the one I mean?"

"No kind of an idee," responded his father with a quizzical wink that was lost on the young man, as his eyes were fixed upon his whittling. "Does she belong to the village?"

"I ain't goin' to let folks know who I've picked out till I git a little mite forrarder," responded Cephas craftily. "Say, father, it's all right to ask a girl twice, ain't it?"

"Certain it is, my son. I never heard there was any special limit to the number o' times you could ask 'em, and their power o' sayin' 'No' is like the mercy of the Lord—it endureth for ever. You wouldn't consider a widder, Cephas? A widder'd be a good company keeper for your mother."

"I hadn't put my good savin's into an ell jest to marry a company keeper for mother," responded Cephas huffily. "I want to be No. 1 with my girl and start right in on trainin' her up to suit me."

their nature to make any changes in 'emself after they once gits started."

"How are you goin' to live with 'em, then?" Cephas inquired, looking up with interest coupled with some incredulity.

"Let them do the trainin'," responded his father, peacefully puffing out the words with his pipe between his lips. "Some of 'em's mild and gentle in discipline, like Parson Boone's wife or Mrs. Timothy Grant, and others is strict and firm like your mother and Mrs. Abel Day. If you happen to git the first kind, why, do as they tell you, and thank the Lord tain't any worse. If you git the second kind jest let 'em put the blinders on you and trot as straight as you know how, without shyn' nor kickin' over the traces, nor bolting, 'cause they've got control o' the bit and tain't no use fightin' ag'in their superior strength. So far as you can judge, in the early stages o' the game, my son—which ain't very fur—which kind have you picked out?"

Cephas whittled on for some moments without a word, but finally, with a sigh drawn from the very toes of his boots, he responded gloomily:

"She's awful spunky, the girl; is anybody can see that; but she's a young thing, and I thought bein' married would kind o' tame her down."

"You can see how much marriage has tamed your mother down," observed Uncle Bart dispassionately. "Howsomever, though your mother can't be called tame, she's got her good pints, for she's always to be counted on. The great thing in life, as I take it, Cephas, is to know exactly what to expect. Your mother's genially credited with an unsartia temper, but folks does her great injustice in so thinkin', for in a long experience I've seldom come across a temper less unsartia than your mother's. You know exactly where to find her every mornin' at sunup and every night at sundown. There ain't nothin' you can do to put her out o' temper, 'cause she's all out aforehand. You can jest go about your reglar business 'thout any fear of disturbin' her any further than she's disturbed a'ready, which is considerable. I don't mind it a mite nowadays, though, after forty years of it. It would kind o' gall me to keep a stiddy watch of a female's disposition day by day, wonderin' when she was goin' to have a tantrum. A tantrum once a year's an awful upsettin' kind of a thing in a family, my son, but a tantrum every twenty-four hours is jest part o' the day's work."

There was a moment's silence, during which Uncle Bart puffed his pipe and Cephas whittled, after which the old man continued:

"Then if you happen to marry a temper like your mother's, Cephas, look what a pow'ful worker you genially get! Look at the way they sweep an' dust an' scrub an' clean! Watch 'em when they go at the dish washin' an' how they whack the rollin' pin an' maul the eggs an' heave the wood into the stove an' s'at the flies out o' the house! The mild and gentle ones like Ivory enough will be settin' in the kitchen rocker readin' the almanac when there ain't no wood in the kitchen box, no doughnuts in the crock, no pies on the swing shelf in the cellar an' the young ones goin' round without a second shift to their backs!"

Cephas' mind was far away during this philosophical dissertation on the ways of women. He could see only a sunny head fairly rioting with curls, a pair of eyes that held his like magnets, although they never gave him a glance of love; a smile that lighted the world far better than the sun, a dimple into which his heart fell headlong whenever he looked at it.

"You're right, father; tain't no use kickin' ag'in 'em," he said as he rose to his feet preparatory to opening the Baxter store. "When I said that 'bout trainin' up a girl to suit me, I kind o' forgot the one I've picked out. I'm considerin' several, but the one I favor most—well, I believe she'd fire up at the first sight o' trainin', and that's the gospel truth."

"Considerin' several, be you, Cephas?" laughed Uncle Bart. "Well, all I hope is that the one you favor most—the girl you've asked once a'ready—is considerin' you?"

Cephas went to the pump and, wetting a large handkerchief, put it in the crown of his straw hat and sauntered out into the burning heat of the open road between his father's shop and Deacon Baxter's store.

"I shan't ask her the next time till this hot spell's over," he thought, "and I won't do it in that dodgasted old store ag'in, neither. I ain't no tongue

tied outdoors, an' I kind o' think I'd be more in the spirit of it after sun down some night after supper!"

Waitstill found a cool and shady place in which to hitch the old mare, loosening her checkrein and putting a sprig of alder in her headstall to assist her in brushing off the flies.

One could reach the Boynton house only by going up a long grassy grown lane that led from the high road. It was a lonely place and Aaron Boynton had bought it when he moved from Saco simply because he secured it at a remarkable bargain, the owner having lost his wife and gone to live in Massachusetts. Ivory would have sold it long ago had circumstances been different, for it was at too great a distance from the schoolhouse and from Lawyer Wilson's office to be at all convenient, but he dreaded to remove his mother from the environment to which she was accustomed and doubted very much whether she would be able to care for a house to which she had not been wonted before her mind became affected.

Here in this safe, secluded corner, amid familiar and thoroughly known conditions, she moved placidly about her daily tasks, performing them with the same care and precision that she had used from the beginning of her married life. All the heavy work was done for her by Ivory and Rodman; the boy in particular being the fleetest footed, the most willing and the most exact of helpers; washing dishes, sweeping and dusting, laying the table as deftly and quietly as a girl. Mrs. Boynton made her own simple dresses of gray calico in summer, or dark linsey-woolsey in winter by the same pattern that she had used when she first came to Edgewood; in fact, there were positively no external changes anywhere to be seen, tragic and terrible as had been those that had wrought havoc in her mind.

Waitstill's heart beat faster as she neared the Boynton house. She had never so much as seen Ivory's mother for years. How would she be met? Who would begin the conversation and what direction would it take? What if Mrs. Boynton should refuse to talk to her at all? She walked slowly along the lane until she saw a slender, gray clad figure stooping over a flower bed in front of the cottage. The woman raised her head with a fawn-like gesture that had something in it of timidly rather than fear, picked some loose bits of green from the ground, and, quietly turning her back upon the on-

coming stranger, disappeared through the open front door.

There could be no retreat on her own part now, thought Waitstill. She wished for a moment that she had made this first visit under Ivory's protection, but her idea had been to gain Mrs. Boynton's confidence and have a quiet friendly talk, such a one as would be impossible in the presence of a third person. Approaching the steps, she called through the doorway in her clear voice: "Ivory asked me to come and see you one day, Mrs. Boynton. I am Waitstill Baxter, the little girl on Town House hill that you used to know."

Mrs. Boynton came from an inner room and stood on the threshold. The name "Waitstill" had always had a charm for her ears, from the time she first heard it years ago until it fell from Ivory's lips this summer, and again it caught her fancy.

"Waitstill! Does Ivory know you?" she repeated softly.

"We've known each other for ever so long—ever since we went to the brick school together when we were boy and girl. And when I was a child my stepmother brought me over here once on an errand, and Ivory showed me a humming bird's nest in that lilac bush by the door."

Mrs. Boynton smiled. "Come and look!" she whispered. "There is always a humming bird's nest in our lilac. How did you remember?"

The two women approached the bush, and Mrs. Boynton carefully parted the leaves to show the dainty morsel of a home thatched with soft gray green and lined with down. "The birds have flown now," she said. "They were like little jewels when they darted off in the sunshine."

Her voice was faint and sweet, as if it came from far away, and her eyes looked not as if they were seeing you, but seeing something through you.

Her pale hair was turned back from her paler face, where the veins showed like blue rivers, and her smile was like the fitting of a moonbeam. She was standing very close to Waitstill, closer than she had been to any woman for many years, and she studied her a little, wistfully yet courteously, as if her attention was attracted by something fresh and winning. She looked at the color ebbing and flowing in the girl's cheeks, at her brows and lashes, at her neck as white as swansdown.

(To be Continued)

Caruso has gone high up in an airship. Following his own high notes, as it were.

The trouble isn't with one slanderous tongue so much as with a thousand listening ears.

A woman will tell her husband not to worry and then worry because he doesn't take her advice.

There is reported to be plenty of oil in Persia. If it takes a tip from Mexico it won't do any spouting.

Make hay while the sun shines, and the sun never shines so steadily and brightly as when you are young.

To deal honestly with others is not so difficult. To compel others to deal honestly with you—that is power.

The financial laws of Mexico are exceedingly liberal. A bank can be started on money that has been spent.

No consistent foe of the fly will be content merely to "swat" and ignore the soap and water and chloride of lime.

Children are to be enlisted in a pure food war. Then babies will probably insist upon sterilized poker handles to chew.

You can never tell by appearance. Many a man who looks run down at the heel is very often mighty well heeled.

Don't waste any time looking back at your mistakes. There is more fun in looking up the mistakes of other people.

The divinity that hedges about a king needs police re-enforcements when Mrs. Pankhurst sounds the charge.

Untaken Pills Did the Work.

A Worcester man told several of his friends that he had the best cure for pleurisy yet known. He said that a doctor had given him a box of pills and instructed him to take them at certain intervals, but he had repeatedly forgotten to take them. Yet he said that their effect was so powerful that they effected a cure by simply remaining in his pocket. He seriously offered to lend them to his friends to be used in a similar way if they were troubled.—Boston Globe.

Heredity in Vegetation.

Biologists are beginning to harness the forces of heredity the same as scientists are learning further how to harness the power of electricity. The results obtained by breeders, building up superior types of plant and animal life by practical application of the laws of heredity, represent in commercial terms alone more than a billion dollars added to the annual production of the United States, which is more than twenty-seven billion dollars.

Cholera's Natural Home.

The marshy ground of the Ganges delta, with its vast masses of vegetation, decaying under a tropical sun, is the native home of the cholera. In that pestilential region the cholera and plague are found every year and all the year round. Every cholera epidemic which has desolated Europe, every visitation of the plague, is believed to have started from the mouth of the Ganges.

Ingersoll on Life and Death.

Life is a narrow vale between the cold and barren peaks of two eternities. We strive in vain to look beyond the heights. We cry aloud and the only answer is the echo of our wailing cry. From the voiceless lips of the unreplying dead there comes no word; but in the night of death hope sees a star and listening love can hear the rustle of a wing.—R. G. Ingersoll.

Just to Get Even.

Wife—"Now, John, my sister Belle and her steady are coming to call on us tonight. So you must act the part of an ideally happy married man. She's not quite sure of him yet!" John (savagely)—"Leave it to me! That lobster trimmed me on a horse trade once! Leave it to me!"—Chicago News.

Killed by Runaway Barrel.

A runaway barrel of beer killed a woman in Glasgow the other day. A carter was unloading a lorry when a beer barrel slipped and rolled down a steep incline, where it fell down a staircase on which were four people. A woman was knocked down and killed instantly and three other people were injured.

No Life is Wasted.

No life is wasted in the great worker's hand. The gem too poor to polish in itself we grind to brighten others.—Philip James Bailey.

River Runs Under Ground.

The River Platte through the summer is dry along the greater portion of its course. The water runs underground, only an occasional pool appearing on the surface. By digging almost anywhere in its course a supply of fresh, cool water may be obtained.

What is Needed.

An Ohio man, after ten years of cross-breeding, has succeeded in producing a chicken having the shortest legs in existence. A great feat, no doubt, but what is needed is a chicken with four drumsticks.—Baltimore American.

Literal Inquiry.

"Posterity will recognize me," said the self-conscious man. "Surely," replied Miss Cayenne, "you don't intend to provide in your will for having yourself put through a process of mummification?"

Oh, Shux!

"You must have thought the world of your first wife," sneered Mrs. Lot the second time during one of the family squabbles. "I certainly did," replied Lot. "She was the salt of the earth."

His Engine Reversed.

"What's the trouble, old man?" "I'm in a bad way. I lie awake nights thinking about my work. Then when I'm at work I keep going to sleep."—Tit-Bits.

His Position.

"My father's elected on the committee who are going to have some more driven wells put down for the city." "Ah, I see; he's on the water board."

His Wife.



"You know, there's more in this world than money."

"If there is my wife hasn't thought of it."—St. Louis Globe Democrat.

Happy Thought.



Conductor—This is a ticklish piece of business. It ought to be removed from the track with little handling. Section Hand—I have it! Run the train over it and grind it to bits!—Wisconsin State Journal.

No Reason.



Lawyer—I might get you off on the grounds of insanity, self defense, brain storm, unwritten law, dual personality, somnambulism—Prisoner—But hang it, I didn't do it! Lawyer—I know you didn't, but no jury would let you off just on that account.—Washington Star.

Grim Comedy.

A certain young actress was constantly irritated by the pious behavior of the actor-manager in whose company she was playing. "Now, Miss Blank," said the great one, "you'll have an opportunity to show your talents in another direction. I've cast you for a dandy part, small, but 'fat.' And you'll have a chance to study me in a new role. You've never seen me do farce comedy, have you?" "Yes, I have," contradicted Miss Blank; "I've seen your Macbeth."—London Mail.

VANQUISHED THE VIRAGO.

With Euclid as His Ally, O'Connell Won a Brilliant Victory.

In an article on "Old Dublin Streets" Mr. J. H. Halloran draws an amusing picture of a notorious virago named Morlarty, keeper of a small shop opposite the Four Courts. Her spirit, originally high and frequently re-enforced by the other variety termed ardent, and her extraordinary range of picturesquely vituperative language made her the terror of whomsoever she denounced and the delight of the audience that always rapidly assembled. She never met her match but once. There have been many versions of that meeting, for the victor was no less a person than Daniel O'Connell, whose friends laid a wager that he could reduce her to silence, but they all appear to be based on the same narrative, published about the middle of the last century by Daniel Owen Madden.

The encounter opened briskly, with a taste of the virago's tongue, promptly administered upon O'Connell venturing to object to the price she asked for a walking stick.

"You old diagonal!" rejoined O'Connell amiably. "Keep a civil tongue in your head!"

Such an epithet, incomprehensible, but doubtless derogatory, did not tend to increase the temerarious civility, and, although further advised—first as a "radius" and then as a "parallel-gram"—not to fly into a passion, her anger steadily increased, rising to a climax of infuriated billingsgate, when O'Connell, refusing to retract what he had said already, accused her instead of "keeping a hyphenate in the house." "You can't deny the charge," he affirmed with apparent indignation. "You can't—your miserable submultiple of a duplicate ratio! While I have a tongue I'll abuse you, you most formidable periphery! Look at her, boys; there she stands, a convicted perpendicular in petticoats! There she trembles with guilt down to the extremities of her corollaries. Ah, you're found out, you rectilinear antecedent and euphuistic old hag—you porter swiping similitude of the bisection of a vortex!"

It was too much. Abandoning words, the enraged virago snatched up a sauceman to hurl at the head of the perpetrator of such an overwhelming onslaught of geometrical verbosity. A bystander deflected its course, and O'Connell prudently retreated, but he had won the wager. With Euclid for his ally, he had vanquished the virago.

Difficulties.

What is difficulty? Only a word indicating the degree of strength requisite for accomplishing particular objects; a mere notice of the necessity for exertion; a bugbear to children and fools; only a mere stimulus to men.—Samuel Warren.

Very Amusing.

The late Dr. A. K. H. Boyd of Scotland once visited a woman who had lost her husband. By way of comforting her he proceeded to set forth with great earnestness and beauty of language the joys of the state to which the departed one had attained. The bereaved woman, with a vivid recollection of her husband's defects, found it hard to share in the minister's hopes, although she wished to show her sense of his kindness. She unburdened herself thus: "Well, Dr. Boyd, you're maybe no vera instructive, but you're eye amusing."

Concealed Weapons.

Once in a college town the rumor that students were carrying concealed weapons reached the ears of the local police. The chief at once issued stringent orders that the heinous practice should be stopped. One day a group of them passed a policeman, and one of the students in so doing put his hand to his hip pocket. Then, as if



MEETLY THEY OBEYED.

recollecting himself in time, he hastily withdrew it and looked sheepishly at the policeman.

"What have you in that pocket?" the latter asked sternly.

Instead of answering the student and all his companions, as if panic stricken, started to run. After a chase all the students were cornered and ordered to deliver up whatever they had in their hip pockets.

Meekly they obeyed. Each one carried a cornucopia. The remarks of the policeman cannot possibly be recorded.—Philadelphia Ledger.